

**Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56**

**'COME AWAY TO A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE NO CELL PHONES, YOUR IPAD WILL NOT WORK, A PLACE WITH ABSOLUTLEY NO WI-FI, A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN REST AND BE RECHARGED.'** AN ATTRACTIVE SOUNDING INVITATION IN THE MIDST OF OUR FAST-PACED, OVER-SCHEDULED, INFORMATION-FILLED DAYS. OUR BUSYNESS SEEMS TO PRECLUDE TIME FOR FAMILY MEALS, IN-DEPTH CONVERSATION WITH FRIENDS, TIMES TO JUST SIT STILL FOR A FEW MINUTES IN THE SILENCE. WE SEEM TO ENJOY THE HECTIC PLACE OF OUR LIVES FOR RARELY DO WE SIT AROUND TALKING ABOUT OUR DOWN TIME. RATHER, WE TELL EACH OTHER HOW BUSY WE ARE. OUR CULTURE ENDORSES ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE BETTER THAN REST. WE IDENTIFY OURSELVES TO ONE ANOTHER MOST OFTEN BY WHAT WE DO RATHER THAN WHO WE ARE. SABBATH, MEANING LITERALLY "TO CEASE," IS A GIFT THAT INVITES US TO STEP AWAY FROM OUR OVER SCHEDULED, BUSY LIVES AND EXPERIENCE REST.

MARK'S TELLING OF THE JESUS STORY HAS A FRANTIC PACE ABOUT IT. IN THE 6<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF MARK, JESUS SENDS OUT HIS DISCIPLES IN PAIRS TO GO AMONG THE VILLAGES AND TEACH. HE GIVES THEM POWER OVER UNCLEAN SPIRITS. HE INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES NOT TAKE FOOD, A BAG OR MONEY WITH THEM BUT TO ACCEPT WITH GRATITUDE THE HOSPITALITY EXTENDED THEM. JESUS SAYS TO HIS DISCIPLES, "IF YOU ARE NOT WELCOMED, NOT LISTENED TO, DON'T MAKE A BIG DEAL ABOUT IT. AS YOU LEAVE SIMPLY SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR FEET AND KEEP GOING." SO THEY WENT OUT AMONG THE VILLAGES PROCLAIMING REPENTANCE, CASTING OUT DEMONS AND HEALING MANY WHO WERE SICK. WHEN THEY RETURNED, THEY COULD NOT WAIT TO TELL JESUS STORIES ABOUT THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE BY THIS TIME, JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES CREATED QUITE A STIR AMONG THE PEOPLE, SO THEY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO STOP AND REST MUCH LESS EAT A MEAL IN PEACE. EVEN AS JESUS LISTENS TO HIS DISCIPLES' STORIES, PEOPLE ARE COMING AND GOING. SO JESUS SAYS TO HIS DISCIPLES, "LET'S GO OFF BY OURSELVES SO WE CAN REST, TALK ABOUT THE GOOD YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED AND SHARE A QUIET MEAL TOGETHER." SO THEY GET IN A BOAT AND SET SAIL FOR THAT DESERTED PLACE WITH NO CELL PHONE RECEPTION, NO WI-FI, NO INTERRUPTIONS, JUST JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS. FINALLY, A LITTLE TIME TO LEAVE THE WORK AT THE OFFICE AND FORGET ANY SCHEDULES AND JUST REST.

AS IT TURNS OUT, JESUS IS ON TO SOMETHING. THE RHYTHM OF WORK AND REST SEEM TO HELP US HUMAN BEINGS FUNCTION BETTER AND FEEL BETTER ABOUT OURSELVES. STUDIES CONFIRM THAT PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF INCOME, WORKING HOURS, PROFESSION OR AGE FEEL BETTER MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY WHEN THEY TAKE TIME OFF FROM THEIR WORK. EVEN THOSE WHO ARE RETIRED...NEED A BREAK. SABBATH IS A GIFT. A DAY TO BE FREED FROM OUR WORK...ANY TYPE OF WORK..TO ENJOY THE CREATION AND THE CREATOR.

JESUS ALSO NEEDS REST AS HE HAS JUST LOST JOHN THE BAPTIST, HIS BELOVED COUSIN AND PROPHET, THE ONE WHO BAPTIZED HIM AND SPENT A LIFETIME IN THE WILDERNESS PREPARING HIS WAY. WORSE, JESUS HAS LOST HIM TO MURDER. "LET'S GO OFF BY

OURSELVES TO A QUIET PLACE AND REST AWHILE," HE SAYS TO HIS DISCIPLES AS THE CROWDS THROG AROUND THEM AT THE EDGE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE RECALLED THAT ONCE HE WENT TO A QUAKER MEETING. HE HAD A PERPLEXING PROBLEM TO SOLVE AND HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET AN ANSWER. PEALE WRITES, "IN A QUAKER MEETING, YOU PRACTICE THE ART OF SPIRITUAL SILENCE. IT IS A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF PSLAM 45, 'BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD', OR ISAIAH 30, 'IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE SHALL BE YOUR STRENGTH.' AFTER A WHILE, EVEN TO THE UNPRACTICED, THE DEEP SILENCE HAS ITS WAY WITH YOU. AT THIS MEETING, A MAN SPOKE. HE SAID, 'IF ANYBODY HERE HAS A PROBLEM, LET THAT PERSON DROP IT INTO A POOL OF DEEP QUIETNESS.' I HAD NEVER HEARD A MORE APT DESCRIPTION." PEALE CONTINUES, "BECAUSE THAT SILENCE WAS DEEP AND IT WAS LIKE A POOL. I TOOK THE PROBLEM THAT HAD BEEN BAFFLING ME AND I SAID TO MYSELF, 'ALL RIGHT. WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS,' AND I LET IT DROP INTO THAT POOL OF QUIETNESS. THEN THE MAN SAID, 'NOW JUST SIT RESTING IN GOD'S QUIETNESS. BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL BREAK UP YOUR PROBLEM INTO COMPONENT PARTS AND GIVE YOU THE ANSWER BEFORE THE MEETING IS OVER.' WE CONTINUED TO SIT AND WAIT AND LISTEN IN THE SILENCE. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG A TIME ELAPSED BEFORE ANOTHER MAN AROSE AND SAID, 'AMEN'. AND THAT WAS THE END OF THE MEETING. ALL OF A SUDDEN, AS CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, CAME THE ANSWER TO MY PROBLEM. AND NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I HAD AS RIGHT AN ANSWER. THE PARTICULAR SLANT WAS DIFFERENT, BECAUSE I HAD BEEN THINKING AND SEARCHING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION. BUT INTUITIVELY, I RECOGNIZED THIS FOR WHAT IT WAS, GOD'S ANSWER.

SOMEONE ONCE SAID THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC IS KILLING US SO THAT WHEN WE WORK SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, WE ATTEMPT WHAT EVEN GOD DID NOT DO. AN OLD SPANISH PROVERB, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS TO DO NOTHING AND THEN REST AFTERWARD.'

SCOTTISH PREACHER WILLIAM BARCLAY RECALLED THE FIRST TIME HE VISITED THE AMERICA, HE THOUGHT THE MAIN AIM OF AMERICANS WAS TO MAKE MONEY; THE TIME HE VISITED, HE THOUGHT THE AIM WAS POWER; AND THE THIRD TIME HE THOUGHT THE AIM WAS SPEED AND THE THIRD IMPRESSION REMAINED. BUT SPEED IS NECESSARY, WE ARGUE, GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF THINGS THERE ARE TO DO IN OUR LIVES. EACH DAY WE ARE PRESSURED TO GIVE MORE, PRODUCE MORE, CARE MORE, ACCOMPLISH MORE. THE WORLD CAN MAKE SO MANY DEMANDS, AND EVEN WHEN THEY ARE WONDERFUL THINGS WE LOVE, LIFE CAN STILL BE SO BUSY...PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY, EMOTIONALLY, EXHAUSTINGLY BUSY. IN ALL THE BUSYNESS, ARE WE TRYING TO EARN OUR OWN SALVATION? DID YOU KNOW THAT IN CHINA THE POLITE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "HOW ARE YOU?" IS TO SAY, "I AM VERY BUSY, THANK YOU."

YET FOR MANY, REST DOESN'T COME NATURALLY. OTHERS FORGET ABOUT IT. OR FEAR IT. OR RESIST IT. BUT TO REMEMBER THAT GOD RESTS, THAT JESUS RESTS, IS STARTLING AND HUMBLING. HOW DARE WE KEEP RUNNING ON FUMES WHEN JESUS HIMSELF INSISTS THAT HIS FOLLOWERS DO OTHERWISE? THE SABBATH IS THE ONLY THING IN THE CREATION STORY THAT GOD CALLS "HOLY." WE DO WELL TO PAY ATTENTION.

**YES, WE NEED DEEP SILENCE. WE NEED TO UNPLUG. FORTUNATELY WE FOLLOW A SAVIOR WHO IS UNAPOLOGETIC ABOUT HIS NEED FOR REST AND SOLITUDE. WHO SEES NO SHAME IN RETREATING WHEN HE AND HIS DISCIPLES NEED A BREAK. WHO DOES SO EVEN WHEN THE NEEDS AROUND HIM CONTINUE TO PRESS IN ON ALL SIDES.**

**JESUS IS ABLE TO DO THIS BECAUSE HE TRUSTS GOD ENOUGH TO LET GO. HE TRUSTS GOD ENOUGH TO LET GO. EVEN AS HE KEEPS HIS COMMITMENTS, JESUS NEVER HOARDS THE LIMELIGHT, OR ALLOW HIS DISCIPLES TO IMAGINE THAT THEIR FAITH MAKES THEM INVINCIBLE. IN THE END, THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM IS GOD'S. WE ARE PRECIOUS AND BELOVED, YES. BUT WE'RE NOT INDISPENSABLE. GOD WILL SURVIVE OUR NAPS. IT IS MORE THAN OKAY TO REST.**